

COMMITTEE FOR PUBLIC PLANTING MEETING MINUTES - 23 MAY 2012

Present: City Arborist David Lefcourt, Chantal Eide, David Davis, Florrie Wescoat, Kathleen Kelly, Emily Axerod, Julianne Schwarzer, Caroline Matthews, Michael Hanlon; and Susan Glazer, Community Development Department.

The meeting took place in the Ackerman Room at City Hall due to construction at 146 Hampshire Street.

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 by David Davis, chairperson.

1. Review Minutes – Minutes for the meeting of April 11, 2012 were approved, as amended with respect to the list of attendees.
2. Review of Tree Ordinances from other Communities. This discussion continued for the entire meeting and will be continued at the July 11 meeting.

A. Codes and practices from other cities. It seems that lots of small cities do not have an advisory body like this Committee for Public Planting. However:

- o San Francisco: very comprehensive urban forestry code. Given certain criteria, trees can be designated as landmarks on both public and private property (if near a public way).
- o Princeton NJ: public projects get reviewed by both arborist and commission; certain private projects also.
- o Falls Church VA: any private project greater than 2,500 built SF have to be approved by arborist.
- o Tacoma Park MD: arborist must grant permission for removal of any privately owned tree over 7" caliper; commission adjudicates when there are issues. Also, residents can request arborist to plant a tree anywhere on their private property, not just 'back of sidewalk.'
- o Savannah: exceptionally old tree code, dating from late 19th century. Park and Tree Commission can propose new ordinances to be brought to City Council for discussion and vote. Also, the Commission appears to have city funding.
- o Wilmington: tree commission has a specific role in public planning process.

B. Some related resources:

- o A website called Municode which accesses ordinances from many municipalities and allows one to do searches using keywords (such as, in this case, "tree committee").
- o The USDA Urban and Community Forestry program supports and encourages public involvement.
- o A state consortium in Connecticut. (??)
- o Possibly the Urban Ecology Institute, based in Cambridge.

C. Relevant Cambridge regulations (pending further research for next meeting):

- o The Tree Ordinance presently provides for review of public projects by Committee for Public Plantings (CPP). This doesn't always occur, and there appears to be no mechanism for notifying either the arborist or the CPP about upcoming public projects.
 - . In the past, there was a CDD staff person who regularly attended CPP meetings and served as a very effective liaison. This person has since retired; reinstating the practice would be beneficial.
- o Cambridge can designate trees on either public or private property as Landmark Trees, a process headed by the Historical Commission. Presently there is only one such tree on private property, a large beech on Massachusetts Ave.
- o The Tree Ordinance states that when a private development of 25,000 (built) SF or more involves removal of a tree greater than 8" caliper (e.g. the current Fogg Museum expansion) the developer has to replace, tree for tree, with trunk of same or greater caliper; alternatively, the developer has to compensate the city for any shortfall in replacement trees.

. CPP and arborist should consider whether the replacement dollar amounts currently specified in the ordinance are appropriate.

. CPP currently has no role in implementing this. What kind of CPP input would be appropriate, and at what point in the process?

- o Susan Glazer noted that proposed private projects of 25,000 (built) SF or more is the threshold for Planning Board review, but that this review occurs at an early, conceptual stage, at which point landscape plans don't show any detail other than specifics about trees to be removed. The only point at which plans are submitted showing specific plantings is at the application for building permit. So this would be the first and only opportunity for a detailed landscape review of Special Permit projects.
- o One of the attendees called our attention to a rule that Special Permits for extremely large projects trigger review by the CPP. This needs to be confirmed, perhaps with Karen Carmean, former CPP member.
- o Summary. The basic questions are: What is CPP's role presently in connection with proposed landscape changes on publicly-owned land and (if any role at all) on privately-owned property? Are the existing CPP review requirements adequate? Is their timing appropriate? What may need to be changed in order to make CPP input effective?

D. Action Items:

- o David Davis – What are the relevant Cambridge regulations; what are the review thresholds, and what review is required at each threshold.
- o Michael Hanlon – Will check with Karen Carmean regarding the CPP role in large-scale Special Permit approvals.
- o Caroline Matthews -- Will research Cambridge's Landmark Tree designation.
- o Caroline Matthews -- Will also investigate Brookline tree regulations.
- o Florrie Wescoat -- Will investigate Boston tree regulations.

3. Arborist Updates were postponed to next meeting.

4. One of the attendees requested that CPP assist the Central Square Baptist Church in dealing with upcoming changes related to Carl Barron Plaza. This will be on the agenda for CPP's next meeting.

5. Next Meeting: This will be at 5:30 pm, July 11, 2012, at 147 Hampshire Street.

6. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 pm.